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MEN-AT-ARMS 108

BRITISH INFANTRY EQUIPMENTS (2)

1908–2000

Revised Edition

MIKE CHAPPELL

SERIES EDITOR: LEE JOHNSON

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TEXT AND COLOUR PLATES BY
MIKE CHAPPELL

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MILITARY

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Author's Note

The original edition of *British Infantry Equipments* was published almost two decades ago. It started life as a series of articles from which the series editor, Martin Windrow, commissioned three Men-at-Arms titles - two on British infantry equipment, and one on cavalry equipment. This revised edition of the second volume incorporates fresh illustrations and additional information gained by the author since 1980. It also concludes with a description of the types of equipment brought into service in the last twenty years.

The author wishes to thank the present series editor for the opportunity to revise and re-illustrate this title, and the many friends, associates and readers of the original who have since added to the sum of information on this particular aspect of British military history. His special thanks are extended to the Librarian and staff of the Prince Consort's Library, Aldershot.

OPPOSITE **The 1914 leather equipment worn by a recruit to the Devonshire Regiment, 1915. See also photograph on page 11. (Author's collection)**

BRITISH INFANTRY EQUIPMENTS 1908–2000

20th CENTURY INFANTRY EQUIPMENTS

As THE 20th century draws to a close mankind may choose to be proud of a period which began with the first puny attempts at powered flight, and ends with the utilisation of space as the circling communication satellites bring him his television pictures and transmit his telephone calls. Scientific progress undreamed of in the 19th century has brought great benefits to some, and may yet bring even greater benefits to all. But the efforts of the scientists have also been applied to war, giving us high explosive and poison gas in the first of the great wars of the century, and the nuclear weapons that ended the second. Since then we have seen a succession of weapons, developed in secret and revealed in the series of wars fought since 1945. Today we are even able to view their delivery and effects on our television screens.

In 1914 armies marched to war on boot-leather, communicating by bugle, flag and lamp, and using millions of horses to tow their guns and supply wagons. Nowadays the infantry ride to battle in armoured vehicles or helicopters and communicate via satellite. Support moves on tracks, wheels or by air, and fire support is guided precisely by the most advanced electronics. But to one battlefield problem science has failed to find an answer: sooner or later infantrymen must leave their vehicles or aircraft and fight on foot, carrying the dead weight of weapons, ammunition, armour, tools, protective equipment, water and rations – a load that is about the same today as it was at the beginning of the 20th century.

The problem seems insuperable. Each attempt to overcome it results in the design of a new set of personal equipment for the infantryman, the hope being that it may make his burden more bearable. Though comfort has been achieved from time to time, the constant introduction of new weapons or protective equipment has added to the infantryman's load, leaving the designers to face up to the problem yet again.

The story of the personal equipment worn by the British infantryman since the early years of the century is told in the following chapters, which concentrate on the equipment sets which saw service in combat. Each set covered has been allocated a chapter, and each chapter begins with the historical background to the set before giving a description of its construction. The story begins where the companion volume – MAA 107 (Revised), *British Infantry Equipments 1808-1908* – ended; and concludes with the current pattern, recently introduced and liable to be in use well into the 21st century.

Northumberland Fusiliers after the action at St Eloi, March 1916. All wear 1908 pattern Battle Order. (IWM)

A former commanding officer of the author's, a soldier with a distinguished record in the Second World War, once said in a speech to recruits in 1952 that the job of the infantryman was to march, dig and shoot. An efficient infantryman, he declared, was one who could march, dig and shoot well. His summary of the rifleman's rôle in the middle of the 20th century may seem redundant today, especially when set against the scenario of future wars; but perhaps there is still something to be said for that simple dictum. To be able to locate your enemy and shoot at him with effect is still the main task of the infantryman in battle (although the priority allocated to skill-at-arms training in peacetime sometimes makes one doubt it). Physical fitness, or the ability to move on foot on the battlefield with a combat load, is as important today as it ever was; and history continues to prove that there will never be a better defence against enemy fire than the pick and shovel. March, dig and shoot – and in order to do this, and to carry the necessary load, a well-designed set of personal equipment is as important today as it was in 1908.

When making a study of infantry equipment sets from the Napoleonic Wars to the present day one is bound to be struck by the way in which good designs have frequently been followed by bad ones, and by the way that configurations repeat themselves. To give an example within the scope of this book one has only to note how some of the best design features of the 1908 pattern web equipment were apparently ignored when the replacement 1937 pattern was under development. The main remit of the team designing the 1937 pattern was to provide a method of carriage for the magazines of the Bren light machine gun. These could easily have been accomplished by modifying the 1908 pattern. Instead, an entirely new (and, in the case of the pack, ill-fitting) design was introduced, which saw service as the 1937 and 1944 patterns for over 20 years – until superseded by a superior design incorporating most of the best features of the 1908 pattern!

Another example: if the reader studies the 1871 Valise Equipment covered in MAA 107 he will be struck by the strong similarity between the equipment sets of 1871 and 1958, both very good designs in their day. It

is worth noting that both these sets were introduced after painstaking research and development.

The quality of an equipment design might be gauged by the degree to which, given the opportunity, the soldier discarded or modified it. One is reminded of the Union infantry of the American Civil War discarding their uncomfortable packs en masse in favour of the 'horseshoe roll' blanket as soon as the drill field receded and the battlefield loomed. Their Confederate counterparts rarely had packs to discard, and were not noticeably less effective for that.

Yet another recurring theme is the contradiction between the loads carried in equipment sets at the design stage and when on actual service. Almost invariably the infantryman's maximum load was reckoned at the design stage as 40-45lbs (roughly 18-20.5kg); and almost invariably the load on service exceeded this, sometimes by as much as 50 per cent. This has been due in some instances to changing tactical dictates, as in the First World War, which saw the introduction of shrapnel helmets, respirators, grenades, etc.; and partly to the practice of Regimental Standing Orders requiring items of clothing, cleaning equipment, etc., which are not vital to the fighting performance of the infantryman, to be carried into battle. The tradition of the British soldier who shaves and shines in the face of the enemy dies hard, and it has been, quite literally, a burdensome tradition.

1908 pattern Battle Order being worn by men of the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers on the Somme, July 1916. Note the carriage of digging tools, gas helmets and extra ammunition. (Imperial War Museum)

Lewis gunners in action at Ovillers on the Somme, July 1916. Note the 1908 pattern webbing, gas helmets, haversacks, and the fact that Lewis gunners had yet to be issued with pistols. (IWM)

Even though most equipment sets were designed so that the wearer could remove and dump his pack or its equivalent before battle, thus being left with the essentials of ammunition, water and tools, the opportunity to do so without loss rarely occurs. Consequently the infantryman has fought carrying the full list of razors, dubbin and so forth considered vital to his wellbeing by his officers. In this respect little has changed since the days of Rifleman Harris, who, on disembarkation at Mondego Bay in 1808, 'marched under a weight sufficient to impede a donkey', and who, at the first opportunity, took the liberty of flinging part of his burden 'to the Devil'.

No record of infantry equipment in the 20th century would be complete without some reference to the Mills Equipment Company, who were responsible for the introduction of woven cotton webbing

1908 pattern Marching Order, winter 1917/18. By this time respirators had been issued and were routinely worn on the chest while in the front line. Note the bulk of the infantryman's load; its weight severely curtailed Tommy's marching range. (IWM)

Cologne, 1919: a private of the 10th Argylls serving with the occupational army, in 1908 pattern Field Service Marching Order. Note the partly filled cartridge carriers, with the retaining strap just visible on the lower left hand set. The unusual S-shape is the strap of his slung respirator fastened behind his belt buckle. (IWM)

equipment into the armies of Great Britain and the United States. That webbing was to be almost universally employed in the 20th century was mainly due to this company, their US counterparts and their successors.

Legend has it that the Mills Equpment Company owed its existence to an officer in the US Army in the days of the Indian Wars of the late 19th century. Captain Anson Mills, noting how the leather loops of improvised cartridge belts caused cartridges to corrode and stick, designed a belt using canvas loops which kept the ammunition serviceable and free. Determined to promote his ideas for webbing equipment, he went into partnership with a weaver and set up a factory to produced woven cotton webbing cartridge belts to a variety of designs. These belts were accepted by the US Army, and saw service in the campaigns of continental expansion and the Spanish-American Wars. Mills enlarged his operation and, in the first decade of the 20th century, the US Army took into service a set of equipment made entirely from cotton webbing.

The British Army had used Mills webbing bandoliers in the Boer War, but because ammunition had been lost from them on the march a low opinion of webbing was held in British military circles. Against this resistance it says much for the quality of design of the Mills 1908 pattern webbing equipment that it was accepted as a replacement for the leather infantry equipment then in service. The Mills Equipment Company in Great Britain never looked back from this moment, and went on to manufacture and supply webbing equipment to the British, British Empire and Commonwealth armed forces.

THE 1908 PATTERN WEB INFANTRY EQUIPMENT

Historical

The conflict in South Africa in 1899-1902 gave the British Army reason to affect swift reforms in the period following the end of hostilities. The humiliating defeats suffered at the hands of a comparatively small number of Boer citizen-soldiers in the opening months of the war showed up deficiencies in leadership, training and equipment. Following a familiar pattern, and like a tough but inept boxer, the British took their bloody nose and eventually won on points in a long contest characterized by plenty of hard pounding but little skill. Victory brought the opportunity to learn from mistakes, and infantry personal equipment was one of the items which came under scrutiny.

Experience showed the current Slade-Wallace equipment to be unsuitable for an infantry arm equipped with a charger-fed magazine rifle. Provision for the carriage of ammunition in chargers (clips) was poor. The equipment was made from a material – buffalo hide – which was unsuited to the 20th - century battlefield. Most telling of all, the design of the Slade-Wallace equipment was bad. In the reports of the 1903 Royal Commission on the War in South Africa we see it described as 'an absurdity'; and, by an infantry officer, as 'cumbersome, heavy and badly balanced'.

In providing an immediate replacement the example of the recent enemy – the Boer – was followed, and a leather bandolier equipment was taken into service. It is sufficient to say of the 1903 Bandolier Equipment that it was realized soon after its introduction that a better designed equipment would be needed for the infantryman.

In the years 1906-08 a committee to examine the diet, training and clothing of the soldier was set up under the chairmanship of the Surgeon-General. A design of infantry equipment produced by Major Burrowes of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, in collaboration with the Mills Web Equipment Company, was presented in 1906. Called the 'Aldershot design', the equipment found favour with the sub-committee; and troop trials followed in Great Britain, the Middle East and India. As a result of these trials the Mills-Burrowes equipment was accepted by the Army Council in December 1907. Work was put in hand to re-equip the infantry arm with the equipment which was to serve them through the Great War and the 20 years that followed. The official title given to the equipment was the 1908 pattern Web Infantry Equipment.

Patrol of North Lancashires in Cambrai, October 1918. The rear view of 1908 pattern Battle Order shows how the mess tin was fixed to the haversack straps. (IWM)

Description

The main feature of the Burrowes design was a diagonal strap passing from the back of the ammunition pouches at the front of the wearer's body and downwards to the rear, where it attached to straps which passed around the valise or pack. This arrangement ensured that most of the weight in the pack bore down through the pouches and the braces supporting them, which were in turn connected to the upper edge of the pack. Thus the weight of the pack was distributed evenly, even when the ammunition pouches were empty. The assembled equipment was in one piece and could be put on and taken off like a

1908 pattern equipment served on well into the 1930s, as evidenced by this photograph of a Vickers machine gun detachment of the 2nd Glosters in Egypt in 1937. The valise being worn by the man nearest the camera has modifications to enable it to be worn with the 1914 pattern leather equipment, and is therefore of Great War vintage. (Gloucestershire Regiment)

coat; and – when properly adjusted to suit the wearer – the belt buckles could be unfastened on the march for greater comfort and cooling.

For the first time there were no constricting straps across the chest, as the water bottle and haversack were attached to the extremities of the braces. (It must be borne in mind that the water bottle and haversack had always been added as supplementary items to previous equipment sets. The 1908 pattern equipment incorporated these items in the whole set.)

The woven cotton webbing from which the equipment was made represented an advance on the materials used before – tan leather or whitened buffalo hide. When wet, cotton webbing would still do the job it was designed for without serious discomfort or deterioration. The properties of wet leather are obvious.

The buckles, studs and tags of the 1908 pattern equipment were all made of brass. Buckles were of the 'D' design with a portion of the frame cut out to permit quick release of the strap end. The 1908 pattern web equipment set consisted of:

One waist belt (3ins wide).
Two braces (2ins wide).
Two cartridge carriers or pouch sets, one left and one right. (Each had five pouches and each pouch contained three chargers or 15 rounds of small arms ammunition – total rounds 150.)
One bayonet frog.
One water bottle and carrier.
One haversack.
One valise or pack.
Two supporting straps for valise or pack.
One entrenching tool with carriers for the head and helve (handle).

To assemble the equipment for Marching Order the belt was first adjusted to suit the waist, the bayonet frog was slid on, and the pouch sets were fixed to the belt front at left and right. Braces were then buckled to the pouch sets and passed over the shoulders, crossing in the small of the back, and fastening to the buckles on the rear of the belt.

As the belt rear and each pouch set had a 2in strap passing downwards, there were now eight strap ends extending from below the pouch sets and the belt rear for the attachment of other items. On the right side was buckled the entrenching tool head in its holder, with the water bottle buckled over it; the haversack was buckled to the left side. To the rear of the bayonet frog was a strap to which the entrenching tool

1908 pattern pistol equipment worn by a major of the 1st Border Regiment, Palestine, 1938. (Border Regiment)

helve holder buckled, allowing the helve to be carried down the side of the bayonet scabbard.

Finally, the valise or pack was buckled to two 'D' buckles on the rear of the braces behind the shoulders and to the diagonal straps projecting from the pouch sets. This was the order of equipment in which the British Expeditionary Force fought the opening battles of the Great War in 1914.

In the design stage the main item intended to be carried in the pack was the greatcoat. The haversack was for rations and similar necessaries, but it is clear from Regimental Orders of the time that much more was ordered to be carried in Marching Order. This, of course, had the effect of negating the aim of keeping the infantryman's total load to about 45 pounds. When the course of the Great War dictated the need for shrapnel helmets, respirators and grenades the burden of the infantryman rose to half the average man's body weight, or 75lbs–34 kilos.

The 1908 web equipment coped with this increased load, but it became clear that a new order was needed in which to fight. Therefore it became practice to dump packs at a convenient spot in rear of the front line, and by attaching the haversack to the braces in the manner of a small pack 'Battle Order' was born. Often it was necessary to attach the mess tin by its handle to the flap straps of the haversack in order to create more space for the extra items which now had to be carried inside it. Even so, with extra ammunition, rations, and so forth the weight carried was considerable, and marches in full equipment were limited to five to seven miles per day.

When infantry went into the attack in the Great War only the first waves might expect to carry no more than Battle Order. Succeeding waves were encumbered with wire, pickets, digging tools, extra ammunition and all the many other items considered essential to the success of the attack and the subsequent consolidation of the objective. In these cases methods of carrying the extras had to be improvised, and the less bulky items were tied to the equipment in sandbags or buckled to convenient parts of it.

Shortly after the introduction of the 1908 pattern the need for equipment for soldiers armed with pistols became apparent. A leather holster and pouch were introduced, with brace attachments, to take the place of the pouch sets as attachment points for the braces and pack. Other specialized webbing was introduced during the Great War, notably carriers for Lewis gun magazines, tools and spares.

The only modification to the 1908 pattern web equipment was made in the early months of the Great War, when it was found that ammunition was being lost from the left-hand pouches when the wearers

British soldiers share cigarettes with their French allies during the winter of 1917/18. The Tommies wear 1914 pattern Marching Order. (IWM)

Private soldier of the 1/10th King's (Liverpool Scottish), 1918. He wears 1914 pattern Battle Order, with all the paraphernalia of an infantryman equipped for the attack - sandbags, shovel, extra ammunition, 'small box' respirator, rations, water, rifle and bayonet. (Author's drawing)

transferred to the sides of the waistbelt. Thus, with the first principle of the Mills-Burrowes design negated, the weight of the pack bore directly down on the rear of the hips. Nevertheless, at a time when stocks of obsolete equipment were being pressed into service, the 1914 pattern leather equipment seemed a very acceptable alternative.

Orders for a million sets were placed with manufacturers of leather goods in Britain and the United States, and it was not long before troops were using the 1914 pattern equipment in all theatres of war. Although evidence exists that both 1908 and 1914 equipment sets were sometimes worn within the same units, uniformity was usually maintained at least at battalion level.

Description

Good quality brown leather with a grained finish was used in the manufacture of the 1914 pattern equipment. Stoutly sewn, the pouches, frogs, carriers and straps were reinforced with metal rivets to ensure strength. Most of the metalwork was in brass. Some early sets were made with a khaki finish.

The pouches were made to accommodate one cotton bandolier of 50 rounds each, so that a total of 100 rounds of small arms ammunition were carried as opposed to the 150 of the 1908 pattern.

The equipment was assembled in much the same manner as the 1908 pattern until it came to the fitting of the pack. Here there were no diagonal straps from the pouches to secure the bottom edge of the pack, the two straps projecting from the sides of the waistbelt serving in their

France, 1918: an anti-aircraft gunner fits a magazine to his Lewis gun. Each of his 1914 pattern pouches held 50 rounds of small arms ammunition in a folded cotton bandolier. (IWM)

stead. Balance of the pack was obtained by pulling the base of the pack as close to the belt as possible. With the top of the pack secured to the upper part of the braces the full weight of the pack was thus borne by the waistbelt, with predictable discomfort.

The leather tongue of the waistbelt could be used for obtaining rapid expansion of the belt for comfort or when slipping the equipment on over a greatcoat. The snake clasp of the buckle was simply hooked into a slot cut in the tongue, thus gaining an instant adjustment of three inches.

A pistol case and pistol ammunition pouch were later provided for troops armed with the pistol, and with these came brace attachments similar to those of the 1908 pattern. (These attachments were also used by medical orderlies, who carried no arms or ammunition.)

Rushed into service as a stop-gap, the 1914 pattern leather infantry equipment gave sterling service. It was doomed to obsolescence as soon as the war was over because of the material from which most of the set was made, and because of the design flaw which threw the whole weight of the pack on to the hips. Few examples of the 1914 pattern survive to this day, but the items that do remain are a tribute to the quality of their manufacture. The author has a 1914 pattern waistbelt 'beaten into a ploughshare' after the Great War and much used since. It is as serviceable today as on the day it was made.

THE 1937 PATTERN WEB EQUIPMENT

Historical

The Armistice of 1918 left the British Empire with enormous quantities of munitions. For four years war factories had poured out at an ever-increasing rate the armaments demanded by the largest British Army ever put into the field. With the peace and the inevitable cutbacks in manpower and money, the Army could look forward to nothing new until wartime stocks were expended. (In 1970, for example, the author's company was issued with shell dressings manufactured and stored in 1917 ...)

1940: an infantry section in their cliff-top trench await the German invaders. They wear 1937 pattern Battle Order with anti-gas equipment which included respirators, gas capes, and brassards on their sleeves which changed colour to warn of a gas attack. (IWM)

As far as infantry personal equipment was concerned, 1918 saw the British Army with large quantities of a design of web equipment which was only ten years old and which had served well in the recent war. The 1914 leather equipment was phased out of service, and, against the background of hard times at home and abroad, the Army went back to its peacetime job of policing the Empire wearing the 1908 pattern equipment. In the years that followed requests for the expenditure of hard cash on costly military novelties fell upon deaf ears, until the ambitions of Hitler's Germany could no longer be ignored. In the late 1930s, with another world war looming, the re-arming and re-equipping

A battalion of a Highland regiment marching from the railway station, 1940. All wear 1937 pattern Marching Order, with bonnets tucked under their pack flaps. (Author's collection)

Company sergeant major of a Highland regiment demonstrating a No. 68 anti-tank rifle grenade, North Africa, 1942. He wears 1937 pattern Battle Order, but without anti-gas equipment - by this time the gas threat had reached a stand-off situation, relieving the infantryman of part of his burden in battle. (Author's drawing)

of the Army to a standard sufficient to enable it to fight a 'mechanized' war was put in hand. In an eleventh-hour atmosphere some of the weapons and equipment needed to replace Great War items or to meet new tactical requirements were ordered into production.

In the infantry sphere some items, notably the Bren light machine gun, were good designs suited to the tactical doctrine of the time; but it was inevitable that bad or obsolescent designs would be put into production in an atmosphere that allowed little time for trials or testing. It was at this time that the 1937 pattern web equipment was accepted as a replacement for the 1908 pattern, and indeed as a personal equipment suitable for all arms of the Army in its new mechanized rôle.

Prior to the introduction of the 1937 equipment all troops in horsed units had a special-to-rôle set of personal equipment. The fledgling Tank Corps, originating from the infantry via the Machine Gun Corps, had used the pistol-armed set of the 1908 pattern equipment. The 1937 pattern design was the first attempt to provide a set of equipment which, when suitably adapted, would serve the newly mechanized infantryman, gunner, tankman and sapper, in fact all but those still involved with horses – which the British military establishment still required in large numbers at the time.

Development of infantry personal equipment in the inter-war years was a low-key affair, with design stemming mainly from the Mills Equipment Company acting on the authority of the War Office, who 'invited' the firm to produce experimental sets for trials based on specifications supplied by the usual military committee. Military planners predicted that future conflicts would be wars of mobility rather than the static slogging matches of 1914-18; and in the early 1930s the Braithewaite Committee on the dress and equipment of the infantry requested the Mills Equipment Company to design a set of personal equipment more suited to the needs of 'mobile war' than the 1908 pattern. It was considered that less ammunition need be carried on the man; the equipment itself should be lighter in weight, with no items hanging below the waistline. (The water bottle was to be carried in a 'rucksack' pack, with access to it gained by slipping the pack off. It will be remembered that this could not be done with the 1908 pattern, which was a 'one-piece' set when assembled.) It was envisaged that the valise would be carried in unit transport. Four designs to these specifications were produced by the Mills Equipment Company, of which one, the No.3 design, was selected for a two-battalion trial in the UK.

Although the No.3 design was accepted in principle as a suitable replacement for the 1908 equipment, progress on it came to a halt pending the evaluation of a new section light automatic weapon, the Bren. In 1936, with the Bren LMG accepted as a replacement for the Lewis gun, the Mills Equipment Company were asked to redesign their No.3 set to accommodate its magazines. Whether or not it was at this time that the decision was taken to change what had been an infantry equipment set into an all-arms equipment set is not certain; but is quite clear that the No.3 design began life as an infantry set, and equally clear that the 1937 pattern which developed from it was designed as a universal equipment. The involvement of the Braithewaite Committee as regards its original charter is unclear from this point.

HM King George VI inspecting a unit in Scotland, 1943. The lance-corporal in the foreground wears 1937 pattern Battle Order and carries the newly-introduced No.4 rifle and bayonet. (Author's collection)

The Mills No.3 design had a number of unique features. It had no belt, the cartridge carriers fastening at the front with a quick-release buckle and at the back by an adjustable strap. The rucksack, judging from available photographs, hung from the shoulders in the manner of the familiar hiker's item, and had two straps on the flap for a pick or shovel to be carried diagonally (a sensible idea which enabled the soldier to sit without mishap, and to adopt a firing position without tipping his helmet over his eyes). The bayonet still hung well below the waist, but as the No.4 rifle with its short cruciform bayonet was already scheduled to replace the No.1 SMLE rifle this was a problem that time and the issue of the No.4 would solve.

Sound though the Mills No.3 design was, the extensive modifications now called for resulted in a new design which resembled the No.3 in none but the most trivial details. The determination of the War Office to have a separate waistbelt which could be used for 'walking out' is worth noting. The new design, eventually to be sealed as the 1937 pattern, underwent what are described as extensive trials, resulting in the first orders being placed with the Mills Equipment Company in 1938, the year of Munich. Thus, after a gestation period of six years, the 1937 pattern web equipment was born. It would serve – with its tropical modification, the 1944 pattern – for over 20 years before post-war defence budgets would permit its replacement. A compromise intended to serve several purposes, it developed from an unhappy period of 'stop-go', being finally rushed into production in the year's breathing space that Munich bought. It was not one of the best designs of equipment. Considering the circumstances leading up to its acceptance, it would have been remarkable if it had been.

Description

The 1937 pattern web equipment was manufactured from the same material, woven cotton webbing, as the 1908 set it replaced. It was waterproofed and dyed to a light khaki colour. The metal fittings were made of brass, and most of the buckles were of the 'D' or tongueless configuration.

The central item of the equipment was the waist belt, the only item common to all sets and orders. It was 2¼ins wide and had a patent clasp buckle, the two halves of which were positioned by runners or slides. At the rear of the belt were two buckles to which fastened the braces. These had a 2in-wide portion in the centre for the shoulders. One of the braces had a loop sewn in so that the braces could be meshed where they crossed between the wearer's shoulder-blades.

Infantry carried their ammunition in pairs of basic pouches. These were rectangular items made to contain two Bren LMG magazines, or grenades, or bandoliers of small arms ammunition. The flap fastened with a patent brass snap fastener (or a fabric tongue and brass loop fastener in later patterns), and at the top rear of each pouch was a buckle

to secure the front end of the braces. Above these buckles were loops to which were attached the hooks of the pack shoulder straps. The pouches were secured to the belt by means of hooks.

Non-infantry troops carried the ammunition for their rifles in cartridge carriers; these were pairs of double pockets, each pocket containing two chargers of ammunition, giving a total capacity of 40 rounds. Fitted to the waist belt by means of hooks, they had a buckle and loop arrangement above them identical to that of the basic pouch.

A frog was provided for the bayonet. As this was somewhat less stable than the 1908 pattern frog, a loop for the handle of the SMLE bayonet was provided.

Although the water bottle, identical to the 1908 pattern item, was intended to be carried in the haversack, a carrier was provided to enable it to be suspended from the ends of the braces. There were two types of carrier: one was a framework of web straps, the other was made as a sleeve of webbing fabric with a strap across the bottom.

The haversack, or 'small pack' as it came to be called, was a rectangular bag 11ins x 9ins x 4ins, carried high on the back. It was divided internally into three sections intended to take the water bottle and a new rectangular pattern of mess tin, with the groundsheet and other necessary items in the main compartment. The 'L'-shaped shoulder straps came in pairs, each with a wide vertical and a narrow horizontal strap, joined in the centre with a hook which could fasten to the pouch, brace attachment or cartridge carrier. The wide end of the shoulder strap had a buckle to engage with the tab on the haversack, and the narrow end fastened to a buckle on its underside.

Brace attachments were intended for the use of personnel armed with pistols or not armed at all (e.g. Royal Army Medical Corps). They

Men of the 6th Royal Scots Fusiliers under fire in Normandy, July 1944. The figure at centre is a platoon sergeant; he carries a binocular case hooked to his 1937 pattern Battle Order, perhaps taken from his platoon officer when the latter became a casualty. Close at hand is the platoon's 2in mortar group, ready to put down smoke or HE as directed by the sergeant. (IWM)

enabled the braces to be fastened to the front of the belt in the absence of pouches or carriers.

Officers and troops armed with pistols (but not Royal Armoured Corps personnel so armed) were issued with a pistol case and a pistol ammunition pouch. The pistol case was designed to accommodate the .38in No.2 Pistol and would not accept other models gracefully. It was intended to be fastened to the waistbelt by means of hooks, and had a similar hook to connect to the ammunition pouch when this was worn above it. In this way the pistol case was often suspended below the belt hanging from the pouch. The pistol ammunition pouch was identical to the compass pocket except that the latter was lined with felt to protect the compass.

Binoculars were carried in a case also lined with felt, but with the additional protection of a vulcanite box immediately within the case. The binocular case could be attached to the waistbelt with metal hooks or slung from a brace or brace-ends.

Officers were issued with an additional item in the shape of the officer's haversack. This was a briefcase-like item measuring 12ins x 9ins x 2ins; it could be suspended from the brace-ends, or carried loose by a handle on the flap. The interior was divided in two and had additional compartments for pencils, protractors and dividers. The carrying capacity of the officer's haversack was considerably less than that of the normal haversack, and it was intended for maps, notebooks and other small items only.

The valise or pack was retained from the 1908 pattern equipment. Worn only in Marching Order, as when changing stations, etc., it was carried in unit transport when in action.

The equipment was assembled according to the set and the order required. The sets were:

(1) Set for infantry (basic pouches).

Glider-borne infantry of the 1st Airborne Division march into Arnhem from their landing zone, September 1944. The odd configuration of their 1937 pattern Battle Order - haversack on the right hip, water bottle on the left, light respirator fitted sideways on the rear of the belt - was occasioned by the cramped space inside gliders. (Author's collection)

(2) Set with cartridge carriers (non-infantry).
(3) Set for personnel armed with pistols (pistol case and ammo pouch).
(4) Set for officers (as for 3, but with binocular and compass cases and officer's haversack).
(5) Set for Royal Armoured Corps (who had a special pattern pistol case.)

The orders were:
(1) Field Service Marching Order (valise worn on back, haversack and water bottle suspended from the brace ends).
(2) Battle Order (haversack worn on back with the water bottle inside).
(3) Skeleton or Musketry Order (as for Battle Order less haversack).
(4) Drill Order (belt and sidearms only).

To assemble any form of set the belt was first adjusted to fit, the bayonet frog was slid on to the left side, and either the basic pouches, cartridge carriers or brace attachments were positioned either side of the belt buckle at the front. The braces were then attached to the pouches, carriers or attachments, and then buckled to the rear of the belt. Personnel armed with the pistol fitted the pistol case to the belt on the left side and the pistol ammo pouch on the right. (Officers fitted the binocular case on the right side, with the pistol ammo pouch and the compass pocket above the pistol case and binocular case respectively.) With the belt, braces and pouch etc. combination assembled and put on, there only remained the attachment and adjustment of the shoulder straps to the haversack, and it too could be put on to form Battle Order.

Although it was originally intended that no item should hang down from the belt in Battle Order, it was soon necessary to resort to this expedient in order to accommodate the entrenching tools which were introduced in the early years of the war, and to carry the water bottle in its carrier in order to make room in the haversack for the extra items considered vital to the soldier in battle. As it took almost four years of war before the No.4 rifle began to replace the SMLE, the long sword-bayonet continued to hang on the side opposite the water bottle.

There were two types of entrenching tool. The first pattern was similar to the German Army item, but this was soon rejected in favour of a reversion to the mattock-style tool of the Great War; a modification to allow the spike-bayonet of the No.4 rifle to be fitted to the helve of this second pattern created a useful mine-prodder; With a helmet, a respirator, and a gas cape rolled and tied above the haversack, the infantryman of 1942 now carried slightly more than his counterpart of 1918.

Fitting the 1937 pattern equipment to obtain some degree of comfort was never an easy task, and was sometimes impossible. The waistbelt had to be worn as tight as possible if it was not to be drawn up under the ribs at the front by the weight of the haversack. The haversack itself only rode comfortably if drawn up at the back of the neck. In this position it, and the cape tied above it, constantly tipped the helmet over the soldier's eyes; while the shoulder straps, where they passed under the arms, cut into the armpits and restricted circulation. If worn 'rucksack' style, low on the back, the haversack bounced up and down when the wearer ran, striking him repeatedly on the back of the head. Finding a compromise that would ensure reasonable comfort was possible for a large, well-built soldier, but was virtually impossible for a smaller man.

Most ex-soldiers who used the 1937 pattern equipment will probably remember it best for the numberless hours spent 'blancoing' (i.e. brushing with a muddy dilution of renovating powder) its straps, pouches and packs, and polishing the dozens of brass buckles, tags and fasteners. For their amusement I feel compelled to quote part of the chapter headed 'Care and Preservation of the Equipment' in the official 1939 pamphlet describing the 1937 pattern equipment. This states: 'Should the equipment become in a dirty or greasy condition, it may be washed, using warm water, soap and a sponge ... The metal work will not be polished, but allowed to get dull, so as to avoid catching the rays of the sun.'

In addition to personal equipment many supplementary items were manufactured in webbing for the infantry. Noteworthy are the utility pouch sets for the carriage of LMG and anti-tank rifle magazines, 2in mortar ammunition, etc.; the special slings, holdalls and spare parts wallets for the Bren LMG; and the pouches for automatic pistol and sub-machine gun magazines. All these items could be found within the infantry platoon. There were many other webbing carriers and cases for infantry signals equipment, etc.

The 1937 pattern equipment was at best adequate for the job it had to do. That the equipment which replaced it at the end of the 1950s, after long and extensive research and development, was excellent by comparison was in large part due to the shortcomings of the 1937 design.

England, 1940: men of a battalion of the Sherwood Foresters wearing 1939 pattern leather equipment in various orders. The newly issued equipment still has its light tan finish. (Author's collection)

THE 1939 PATTERN LEATHER EQUIPMENT

Historical

On the outbreak of war demand for equipment outstripped supply and, following the precedent of 1914, a set was again ordered from the leather trade to supplement the 1937 pattern equipment. Unlike the 1914 pattern, however, the 1939 pattern leather equipment employed the buckles of the current webbing set while following its design closely.

The 1939 pattern leather equipment was issued to second-line troops and to troops undergoing training. As soon as sufficient webbing equipment became available the 1939 pattern leather equipment was withdrawn, and reissued to forces such as 'free' Belgian and Dutch troops. Quantities were shipped to Russia and were issued to Czech and Polish troops there. The 1939 pattern leather set therefore saw much active service, but only briefly with the British Army, where it was used by some of the lines-of-communications infantry in the weeks before the BEF's evacuation of France.

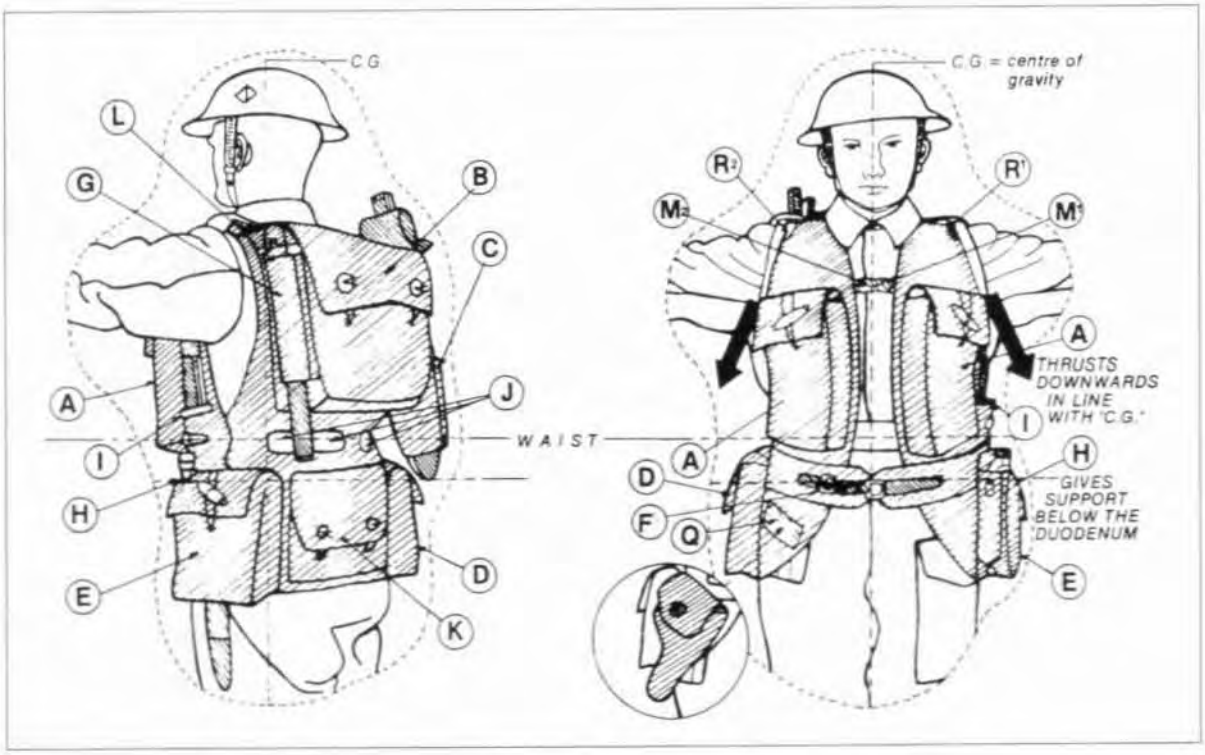
Northern Ireland, 1942: King George VI inspects a guard of honour provided by the Royal Ulster Rifles. The men wear 1939 pattern Musketry Order, which has been polished to a dark glossy finish; see Plate E1. (IWM)

THE 1942 BATTLE JERKIN

Historical

Dissatisfaction with the 1937 pattern equipment and its limitations in the opening campaigns of the Second World War gave birth to a school of belief that webbing had had its day. The 1937 equipment was hard to modify, although crude attempts to solve the problem of the dangling sword-bayonet led to the frog being fixed to the left shoulder strap of the haversack. Carriage of a pick or shovel was effected by slipping the implement between the wearer's back and the haversack, or attaching it between the flap straps of the haversack with a piece of wood. Whatever its shortcomings, it was hard to envisage a replacement for the 1937 pattern equipment in the middle of a world war. Nevertheless, in 1942 the Chief Ordnance Officer of the Field Stores, Aldershot – Colonel E.R. Rivers-Macpherson – devised an infantry equipment that was a complete departure from the trends of equipment design and evolution of the past 300 years.

Colonel Rivers-Macpherson had a low opinion of the 1937 equipment. In his pamphlet introducing his design he claimed that most infantry COs regarded the 1937 equipment as clumsy, noisy, restricting of mobility, difficult to get through obstacles, allowing no flexibility for weapons, cramping, uncomfortable and galling to the soldier! He further considered it to be no advance on that worn 100 years previously. After a careful summary of what a modern equipment ought to afford,



the colonel introduced his answer to the problem, which he described as 'a simple and easy-fitting garment, on the lines of a poacher's jacket'. The item was to be called a battle jerkin.

Description

The battle jerkin was made of brown cotton duck material and was waterproofed. It resembled a hip-length waistcoat with a multitude of exterior and interior pockets. Made in three sizes to suit all average shapes, it weighed 2¼lbs against the full 5½lbs of the conventional 1937 pattern Battle Order.

The jerkin could accommodate a phenomenal amount of kit. The universal pockets on the chest could each hold two Bren mags, or one pair of wire-cutters, or one Boys anti-tank rifle magazine, or six Thompson magazines, or five Sten magazines, or 100 rounds of small arms ammo, or six grenades, or one signal pistol, or a pair of binoculars, or a pistol with its ammunition. The right bomb pocket could hold four grenades, or two 2in mortar bombs, or two slabs of gun-cotton. The left bomb pocket could hold the water bottle, or six grenades, or two 2in mortar bombs, or three slabs of gun-cotton. The No.4 bayonet was carried in the leading edge of the left bomb pocket, and a Commando knife or SMLE bayonet could be carried in slots in the left lower chest. An inside pocket in the 'tail' of the jerkin was intended for soft items, while an outside pocket in the same region accepted the entrenching tool head or two 2in mortar bombs. The pack pocket behind the shoulders was capable of carrying the gas cape, 48 hours' rations, knife, fork and spoon, iron ration, mess tin and 100 rounds of small arms ammunition. On either side of the pack pocket were 'sleeve' frogs for the entrenching tool helve and a machete in its sheath. The jerkin had

Drawings from the instructional booklet issued with the 1942 Battle Jerkin. Key:
(A) Universal pouches
(B) Flap of pack pocket, closed by cords and toggles
(C) Sleeve for machete - also accomodates 2in mortar barrel
(D & E) Bomb pockets
(F) Waist fastening
(G) Sleeve for entrenching tool helve
(H) Sleeve for No.4 bayonet on left bomb pocket
(I) Alternative - slots for SMLE bayonet
(J) Rear ventilation vents
(K) Lower pouch, riding 'tethered' by three straps - entrenching tool head
(L) Shoulder cords emerge through holes from internal washers, for attachment of extra items.
(M) Chest fastening
(Q) Strap for attachment of pistol holster
(R) Raised 'stops' on shoulders to prevent equipment straps slipping.

a further inside pocket in the chest region for maps, and a tab to secure a pistol holster.

There were ventilating panels in the waist, while each pocket had a drain hole to permit rapid drainage should the wearer have to swim. On the shoulders were whipcord loops to secure items carried on the pack, and stops to prevent slings, etc. slipping from the shoulders. Two buckles fitting at the waist and lower chest secured the jerkin, and either form of respirator then in service could be worn beneath it.

Colonel Rivers-Macpherson made many claims on behalf of his invention, including:

(1) Accessibility of weapons and ammunition, coupled with flexibility of variety of same.
(2) Easy to put on and take off.
(3) A Mae West life jacket could be worn beneath the jerkin and could be inflated and used in that position.
(4) The jerkin was absolutely silent.
(5) It gave protection from the rain.
(6) Its camouflage qualities were better than webbing.
(7) It was much more comfortable to wear than webbing.

In August 1942 a trial to compare the battle jerkin with the 1937 pattern web equipment was conducted by the RAMC. Results showed marginally in favour of the jerkin, despite claims that it made a soldier hotter on the march than did webbing.

From this moment on the fortunes of the battle jerkin declined, as might have even the most revolutionary design in the face of massive wartime production of the 1937 pattern equipment. Made in small numbers, the battle jerkin saw action on Combined Operations including Mediterranean raids; and on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day used by some of the Commandos and assault infantry. (Also used by Commandos and special forces were two types of 'skeleton' battle jerkin designed to be worn with a rucksack. The main users were the units training for the liberation of Norway – in particular the 52nd Lowland Division.) From June 1944 the battle jerkin seems to have disappeared into obscurity, suffering its final indignity by being sold off in the days of postwar shortages as a garment 'useful to hikers'. It never again saw service in any military context, although it would – in a modified form – be used as a contender in the trials of the 1950s to find a replacement for the 1937 web equipment.

THE 1944 PATTERN WEB EQUIPMENT

Historical

The entry of the Japanese into the Second World War found the Allies ill-prepared to fight a campaign in the conditions prevailing in the Far East. Japanese successes in South-East Asia and the Pacific archipelagos following the Pearl Harbor attack were due as much to the inability of the Allies to adapt tactically to terrain and climate as to any other factor.

With military priorities, thinking and doctrine geared to the European theatre of operations, much time was to pass before the British were able to cope with the difficulties confronting them in the Far East. Operations such as the first Chindit expedition in 1943

ABOVE **Malaya, 1949: the 1944 pattern web equipment being worn on a jungle patrol. (Author's collection)**

LEFT **Malaya, 1956: infantry patrol wearing 1944 pattern equipment - the leading man has the 1937 (essentially, 1908) pack in preference to the 1944 pattern. (Author's collection)**

highlighted the need for formations to be able to operate without traditionally accepted forms of lines of communications, and showed up shortcomings in some of the standard weaponry and equipment.

At this time planners were preparing for a long and arduous campaign to defeat the Japanese. The way in which the atomic bombs would abruptly end the war could not then be forseen, and it was considered that it might take until 1947 to force Japan into unconditional surrender. Much consideration was therefore given to special-to-theatre weapons and equipment to aid Allied ground forces in the difficult task they faced.

One of the decisions taken as a result of the Lethbridge Mission to the Far East in 1944 was that the 1937 pattern web equipment should be

1908 PATTERN WEB INFANTRY EQUIPMENT

1: L/Cpl., 1st Bn., Gloucestershire Regt.; England, 1910

2: Pte., 7th Bn., Seaforth Highlanders, 9th (Scottish) Div.; The Somme, July 1916

3: Lt, 2nd Bn., Lancashire Fusiliers, 4th Div.; Western Front, 1918

1914 PATTERN LEATHER EQUIPMENT
1: Sgt., 8th Bn., Rifle Brigade, 14th (Lt.) Div.; Loos, 1915
2: Pte., 1st/5th Bn., King's Own, 55th (West Lancs.) Div.; France, 1918
3: Sgt., 54th MG Coy., 18th (Eastern) Div.; Western Front, 1917
1
2
3

1937 PATTERN WEB EQUIPMENT

1: Guardsman, 1st Bn., Welsh Guards, BEF; France, 1939/40

2: Sgt., 2nd/4th Bn., Hampshire Regt., 43rd (Wessex) Div.; England, 1942

3: Capt., 1st Bn., Royal Norfolk Regt., 24th Guards Independent Bde.Gp.; England, 1941

C

1937 PATTERN WEB EQUIPMENT

1: Infantry signaller, North Africa, 1941

2: L/Cpl., 1st Bn., Scots Guards, 24th Independent Bde.(Guards); Naples, 1944

3: Infantryman, North-West Europe, early 1945

1939 PATTERN LEATHER EQUIPMENT
& 1942 BATTLE JERKIN

1: CSM, 31st Bn., Royal Ulster Rifles; N.Ireland, 1942
2: Corporal, No.2 Commando; Yugoslavia, 1944
3: Cpl., 2nd Bn., East Yorshire Regt., 3rd Div.; Normandy, 6 June 1944

1944 PATTERN WEB EQUIPMENT

1: L/Cpl., 12th (Yorks.) Bn., Parachute Regt., 5th Parachute Bde.; Java, 1946

2: Capt., 1st Bn., Gloucestershire Regt., Commonwealth Div.; Korea, 1951

3: Cpl., 1st Bn., Royal Hampshire Regt., 18th Bde.; Pahang, Malaya, 1954

1958 PATTERN WEB EQUIPMENT

1: Infantryman, United Nations forces; Cyprus, 1969

2: Sniper, Belfast, 1970

3: GPMG gunner, 2nd Bn., Parachute Regiment; Falklands, 1982

1990 PATTERN EQUIPMENT

1: Pte., 1st Bn., Staffordshire Regt., 7th Armd.Bde.; Saudi Arabia, 1991

2: Sgt., 1st Bn., Devonshire & Dorset Regt.; UNPROFOR, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1995

3: Pte., 1st Bn., The Black Watch; UK, present day

modified to produce a design more suited to the needs of the infantryman in the light of recent experience. The equipment called for was to be similar to the 1937 pattern but with webbing which was lighter, thinner and more pliable. The shoulder straps were to be wider, and an aluminium water bottle was recommended.

A pattern of equipment based on these specifications was produced by the Mills Equipment Company and was considered by the British military authorities, as well as another pattern of jungle equipment being developed by the company at the time. After much modification a set of equipment based on the best features of both designs finally emerged and was sealed as the 1944 pattern web equipment.

Production and issue of the 1944 pattern was such that it did not see service during the Second World War. The unconditional surrender of Japan removed the need for the new equipment on any large scale; however, British airborne units engaged in the Allied re-occupation of Java in late 1945 used the 1944 pattern equipment in combat.

Airborne and parachute formations became the first and the only exclusive users of the 1944 pattern equipment in the postwar years, and continued to use it until it was replaced by the 1958 pattern equipment. Otherwise the '44 pattern, as it came to be called, became a theatre issue, used for the purpose for which it was designed: campaigning in the Far East. British and Commonwealth troops used the '44 pattern in the Korean War, the Malayan 'Emergency', the operations against Mau-Mau in Kenya, and in later wars east of Suez.

The advantages of the 1944 pattern equipment when compared to the '37 pattern were not outstanding. That it was less durable is beyond dispute; the webbing frayed and split more readily, and the metal alloy fitments fractured and slipped under great weight or stress. In Malaya, where heavy loads had to be carried by the infantryman in some of the worst conditions of terrain and climate in the world, drastic modifications of the '44 pattern equipment were necessary, with all but the haversack and water bottle being discarded in favour of improvised belts, pouches and pack straps. In some cases the '37 pattern pack was preferred to the '44 pattern haversack. (A Bren gunner, for example, would be carrying 85lbs at the outset of an operation. This weight would decrease only slightly as he consumed the food he carried.)

The '44 pattern equipment was probably at its best when carrying normal loads, for which the haversack was well adapted. The water bottle, with its useful cup and accessible cover, was probably the best item of the equipment. The equipment found most favour with the soldier of the immediate postwar years in that it did not need to be blancoed and had no brass to polish – a not inconsiderable boon at the time.

Description

The set was made of lightweight webbing dyed jungle-green and proofed against rot. The metal fittings were lightweight anodized alloy. The waist belt was of the back-adjusting type, being made in three sections, the left and right sections having a patent buckle and a clasp for the braces. A webbing loop to fasten the butt of the rifle when carried slung was sewn to the right section. The centre or back portion of the belt had buckles for the braces, and a row of eyelets to secure the water bottle carrier, machete sheath, etc. were inserted at two-inch intervals along the entire lower edge of the belt.

The 1944 pattern web equipment - right side, and rear, left side. It is configured here without the haversack, to show the arrangement of the braces at the rear. (Author's collection)

The pouches were much larger than the '37 pattern, and the left-hand pouch had loops on one side to hold a short bayonet. A separate bayonet frog was also issued for longer bayonets.

The braces had wide (3in) shoulder sections tapering to 1in straps at the front and pairs of 1in straps at the rear. These rear straps were joined together to make the braces a one-piece set. The braces attached to the pouches (or brace attachments) at the front of the wearer, and crossed at his back to attach to the belt buckles and clasps. This configuration was designed for two purposes. It was considered to give more stability to the increased weight in the pouches; and the belt centre or back section could be removed to allow a soldier with a rash or sore in the waist area – common in the tropics – to wear the equipment without undue discomfort. The water bottle carrier fastened to the belt by means of a wire clip which engaged in the eyelets of the belt. A machete sheath attached to the belt in the same manner.

The haversack had a waterproof central main compartment with pockets on either side large enough to take the mess tin halves. The poncho or groundsheet was rolled and secured below the haversack by means of straps. There was provision for the attachment of a digging tool by means of straps on the flap and body of the haversack. Shoulder straps similar to those of the '37 pattern set secured the haversack in position, and these clipped to the buckles on top of the pouches. A strap passed from the bottom edge of the haversack around the lower chest, passing through loops on the inside of the pouches. (It was nearly always used as a supplementary strap for the attachment of the poncho.)

A rucksack was designed for use with the '44 pattern equipment. It was intended to be worn either from the shoulder straps in the manner of a pack, or fastened to a manpack frame. These rucksacks were extremely hard to come by. (This was an excellent item, and the author was lucky enough to acquire one which he used in Malaya until it fell to pieces; it was sadly missed.)

Also issued with the '44 pattern equipment were pistol cases, brace attachments, binocular cases and pistol ammunition/compass cases for the officers' set or for those soldiers armed with the pistol.

Aden, 1967: an urban patrol armed with 7.62mm L1A1 self-loading rifles (SLRs) and wearing minimal 1958 pattern equipment; the signaller carries an A41 radio. 1960 had seen the end of National Service in the British forces and reversion to an all-Regular infantry. (Author's collection)

THE 1958 PATTERN WEB EQUIPMENT

Historical

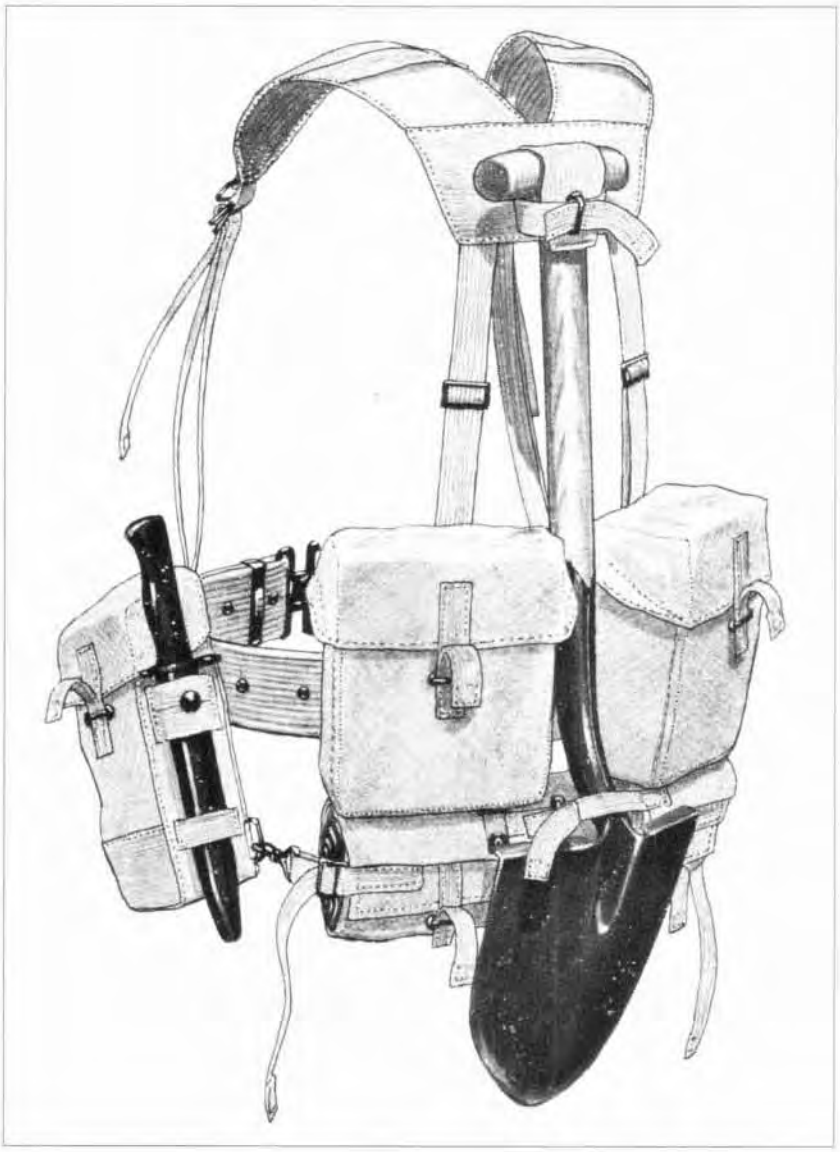
The victory of 1945 saw a situation similar to that of 1918. The huge industrial potential of Great Britain had been geared for six years to the task of winning the war. Now, war-weary and bankrupt, the nation

surveyed the vast parks of military stores that the peace had made surplus to requirements.

Amongst the rendundant implements of war there were huge quantities of the 1937 pattern web equipment. Available, too, were the orders of the special-to-theatre 1944 pattern web equipment which the early surrender of Japan had prevented from seeing service. With these stocks on hand, and money available for nothing but the barest military essentials, it was predictable that the 1937 and 1944 patterns, imperfect though they were, would have to serve the British Army for some time to come.

It was not until 1950 that the War Office decided to go ahead with the development of an improved design of load-carrying equipment, and the following year saw the appearance of the Ordnance-designed 1951 experimental web equipment – the Z2 pattern – which underwent evaulation in competition with current equipments, modified and unmodified. Testing and development was a lengthy and unhurried business from here on – probably as a result of the experience of the unfortunate sequence of events which led to the acceptance of the 1937 pattern equipment – with the War Office determined to get it right this time. It was not until 1956 that serving soldiers got their first glimpse of the shape of things to come, as the equipment that would eventually become the 1958 pattern began to appear for large scale troop trials.

1958 pattern equipment, from left three-quarter rear, with light-weight shovel and SLR bayonet attached. (Author's drawing)



At about this time designers of military load-carrying equipment worldwide were beginning to arrive at similar conclusions, discovering that the best solution was to start with a padded yoke over the shoulders from which braces or suspenders attached front and rear to a waist belt. With a pair of pouches large enough to take two rifle magazines, a canteen, an entrenching tool and a small valise fixed to the belt, they put forward their solutions to

military load-carrying. Thus the Americans and the British contrived to produce sets of personal equipment remarkably alike, with the armies of the nations under their influence following their lead, and most others eventually following suit. (A study of infantry personal equipment used in the late 1950s is most enlightening. Very few designs failed to conform to the yoke-and-belt concept. Only the Chinese, with their bib-and-brace equipment, were the odd men out.)

In Great Britain the re-equipping of the infantry with the 1958 pattern web equipment was well under way by 1960. With little regret battalions handed in the 1937 pattern webbing.

RIGHT **UK, 1980s: a soldier stoops to pick up his field pack. Once it is on he will be carrying full 1958 pattern combat equipment, NBC gear, sleeping bag and a parka. (MOD)**

BELOW **The Middle East, 1980s: a GPMG position (sustained fire) of the 1st Queen's Own Highlanders. The man at left wears 1958 pattern CEFO (Combat Equipment, Fighting Order) but with his poncho roll worn above the kidney pouches – a fairly common practice. (UKLF)**

England, 1980s: on exercise, an infantryman gives first aid to a casualty. His 1958 pattern CEFO and helmet have been camouflaged with plastic 'scrim'. (UKLF)

NAAFI sales of blanco and metal polish slumped alarmingly, and serving infantrymen enjoyed for the first time a set of personal equipment that had been carefully thought out, was reasonably comfortable to wear, and had provision for most of their needs in battle.

Description

The 1958 pattern web equipment was made from woven cotton webbing, pre-shrunk and dyed dark green. The main feature of the equipment was the yoke which spread the weight to be borne over the shoulders. The yoke consisted of two broad padded shoulder pieces, joined in the area of the shoulderblades by a lateral piece to which was stitched a strap-and-buckle device for attaching a lightweight pick or shovel. At either side of the lateral piece adjustable straps were stitched, each of which attached to the waist belt rear by means of pads and hooks. At the front extremities of the yoke were quick-release buckles and long straps; these passed through loops on the pouch, pistol case or binocular case at the front of the belt, and were secured back to the quick-release buckle. (By means of this strap-and-buckle arrangement rapid adjustment of the tension between belt and yoke could be made, thus shifting weight from the shoulders to the waist. This was quite a boon on the march.) To complete the yoke, loops were stitched to the shoulder pieces to secure the straps of the field pack, a webbing loop in rear and a metal loop in front.

The waist belt was similar to the '37 pattern as regards size and the buckle/runner arrangement, but the buckles, like all metal parts on the equipment, were made of steel or alloy and finished in green or black. Adjustment of the belt was obtained with hooks and a series of eyelets running along the belt's centre. Stitched to rear of the belt were two metal loops for the attachment of the cape carrier.

The ammunition pouches, which were fastened to the belt by hooks, came as a set, left and right. The pouches held a variety of combinations of ammunition and magazines, while the left pouch had a bayonet frog on its side, and the right pouch had a pocket originally intended for a rifle-grenade launcher. (It made a convenient spot to stow a knife, fork and spoon set.) Both pouches had a metal loop on their rear-facing side for the attachment of the cape carrier. The enlargement of the pouches

and the addition of web loops on the shoulder pads of the yoke were the only major modifications to the set.

Fastened to the belt at the rear were a pair of large ('kidney') pouches for the carriage of mess tins, rations, etc.

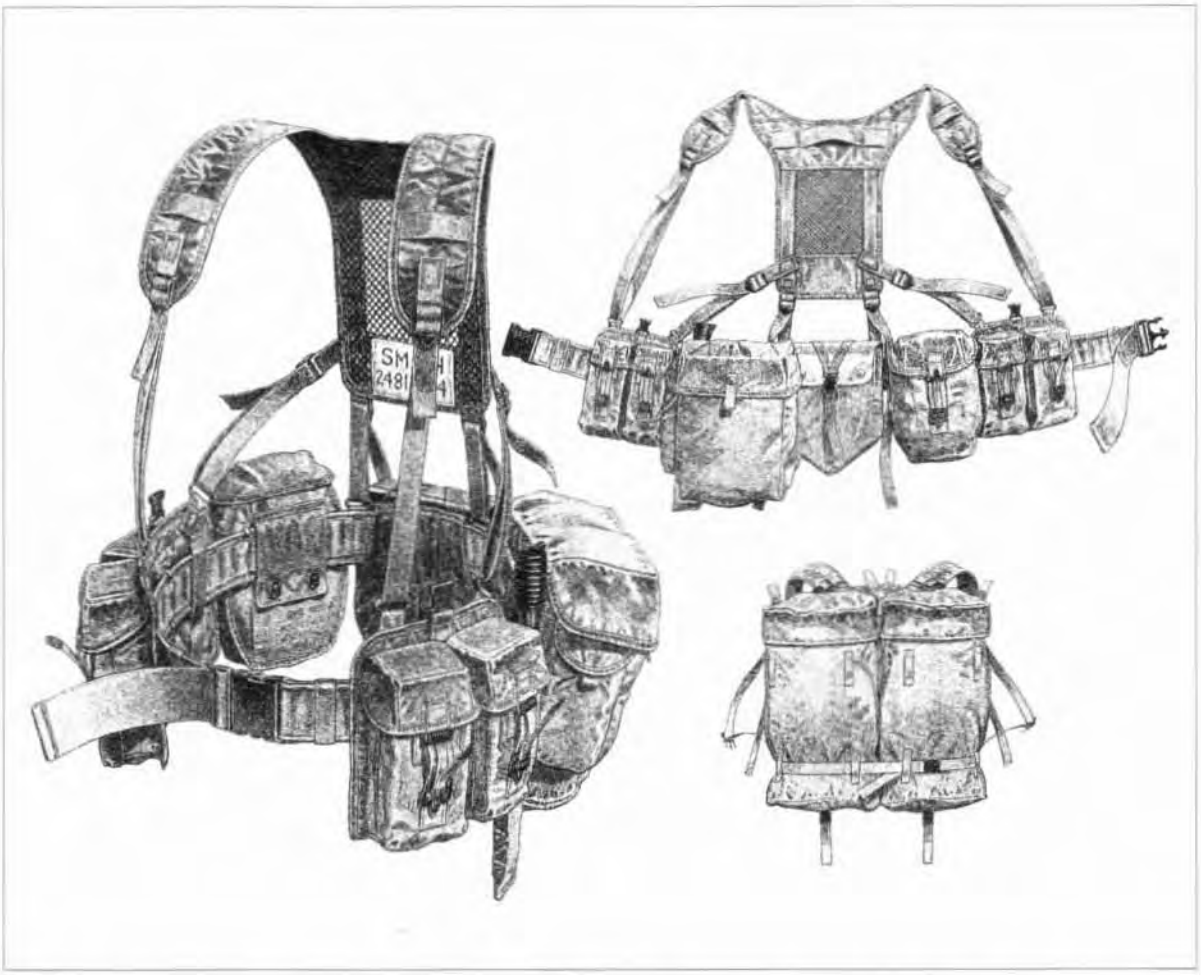
Below the kidney pouches was a cape carrier. This connected to the belt and ammunition pouches by means of four spring-loaded hooks. The carrier's purpose was to contain a groundsheet or poncho in such a way that it was accessible. Two quick-release tabs with two adjustment positions fastened the carrier, while on its top surface there was a container for the head of the lightweight pick and a securing strap for the helve of the pick or the shaft of the lightweight shovel.

Completing the set to form what was termed Combat Equipment, Fighting Order (CEFO) was a plastic water bottle and mug combination in a webbing carrier which fitted to the belt on one side of the kidney pouches, leaving the other side free for the stowage of NBC (Nuclear, Biological, Chemical) equipment.

School of Infantry, Warminster, 1980s: the prototype equipments that were to become the 1990 pattern. The soldier at left wears the rucksack, and the man at right the Patrol Order with full NBC protection equipment. (UKLF)

Fitting the 1958 pattern web equipment was not difficult nor as critical as previous sets. A soldier could only ensure comfort with the 1908 pattern, and some degree of comfort with the 1937 pattern, if he adjusted the set exactly. Once fitted, the 1908 and 1937 pattern sets could only be re-adjusted by removing the whole set. One of the best features of the 1958 pattern set was that it could be adjusted and re-adjusted while being worn. The belt did not need to be tight and a great variety of adjustment – and hence, relief from galling – could be obtained by lengthening or shortening the brace straps at the front of the body (vertical tension), and the straps connecting the cape carrier to the ammunition pouches (lateral tension).

Issued with the '58 pattern set were a lightweight pick or shovel. These were slightly cut-down versions of the



The 1990 pattern equipment, showing (left & top) Assault Order, and the side pouches of the rucksack zipped together to form a pack. On the belt, left to right, are pouches, bayonet, respirator, entrenching tool, water bottle and pouches. (Author's drawing)

general service pick and shovel and were almost as efficient as the full-size items.

As pistols had gone out of favour when the '58 pattern web equipment appeared (only two were issued to an infantry battalion) no provision was made for their carriage in the set. Pistol cases of Canadian manufacture, supplied with the Browning 9mm semi-automatic then coming into service, served for those officers occasionally seen with pistols. However, the involvement of the military in Northern Ireland after 1969 brought about a requirement for pistols to be issued on a much larger scale, and a pistol case to fit the '58 pattern set was designed and issued. Shortly after this it was realized that the '37 pattern compass and binocular case also fitted badly into the '58 pattern set, and new designs were issued.

The now-familiar dark green webbing used in the manufacture of the '58 equipment was also used to make the various wallets and cases needed for the then current generation of platoon weapons. The final item in the family of '58 pattern equipment was the field pack. Although it could be worn – perched above the kidney pouches and fastened to the loops on the braces and ammo pouches to form Combat Equipment, Marching Order (CEMO) – it was rarely used for any other purpose than the stowage of personal kit in unit transport.

THE 1990 PATTERN INFANTRY EQUIPMENT

Historical

Serious criticism was levelled against the '58 pattern equipment following the 1982 Falklands War. The cotton webbing from which it was made absorbed water, which then froze in the extreme climate of the South Atlantic; and its design did not permit frame rucksacks to be carried in comfort.

With a new rifle about to come into service (the 5.56mm SA80), research and development proceeded using newer fabrics; and experimental designs of equipment were sent to units for comments whilst testing was carried out at the Army Personnel Research Establishment. Here climatic conditions from Arctic to jungle could be simulated, while relays of soldiers subjected items under test to the most severe punishment. Eventually a design of equipment termed the PLCE (Inf) – Personnel Load Carrying Equipment (Infantry) – emerged in the late 1980s, and unit trials began. From these emerged the 1990 pattern Infantry Equipment.

The equipment was the first to be made from a green nylon material with extensive use of plastics for buckles. These were meant to give durability, waterproofing and light weight. It was designed to be worn in any one of three configurations:

(1) Assault Order. Consisting of belt, yoke, entrenching tool, pouches (left and right), bayonet frog, water bottle, utility pouch and respirator haversack.
(2) Patrol Order. As Assault Order but with one or two of the rucksack side pouches worn as a pack or 'jap sack'.
(3) Marching Order. Assault Order plus a rucksack.

Difficulty was soon experienced when fitting pouches, etc. to the belt. Unless a soldier was of excessive girth there was insufficient room to get all the items on, and they usually formed an awkward, bulky jumble around the wearer's back and sides. This was uncomfortable enough when on foot; in the confines of an armoured personnel carrier it could lead to extreme discomfort when sitting, and difficulty when getting in and out of the vehicle.

To overcome these difficulties some soldiers purchased the sets of equipment which began to be offered commercially (especially the 'Arktis' chest equipment, modelled on the set worn by Chinese infantrymen). Those persevering with the 1990 pattern equipment discovered that its awkward bulk was not its only disadvantage. The US Army-type entrenching tool was of limited use for serious digging, while the design of the respirator haversack flap was such that contents were sometimes lost and dirt frequently found its way in.

Shortly after its introduction the green material from which the equipment was made was changed to one with a camouflage finish

Light Support Weapon gunner, Iraq, 1991. He wears 1990 pattern equipment over his NBC suit and Combat Body Armour. (Author's drawing)

similar to that of the DPM (disruptive pattern material) from which combat dress is made.

Description

The waist belt is made in three sizes to fit waists from 28ins to 44ins and has a quick release/quick adjustment buckle. Two steel rings are stitched to the rear of the belt.

The main yoke consists of a padded 'Y'-piece enclosing a nylon mesh back. Straps secure the yoke to the rings of the waistbelt and to the pouches. All are adjustable by means of 'ladder-lock' buckles.

The entrenching tool has a folding handle and can be set up as a shovel or a mattock. In its plastic case it is attached to the belt by means of its carrier.

The ammunition pouches come as a set, left and right. Each consists of a pad on which are two pouches, each designed to accomodate three 30-round magazines for the SA80 rifle. Pouches are secured by means of velcro and plastic catches. The set fastens to the waistbelt by means of loops, and has steel rings to which the yoke straps attach.

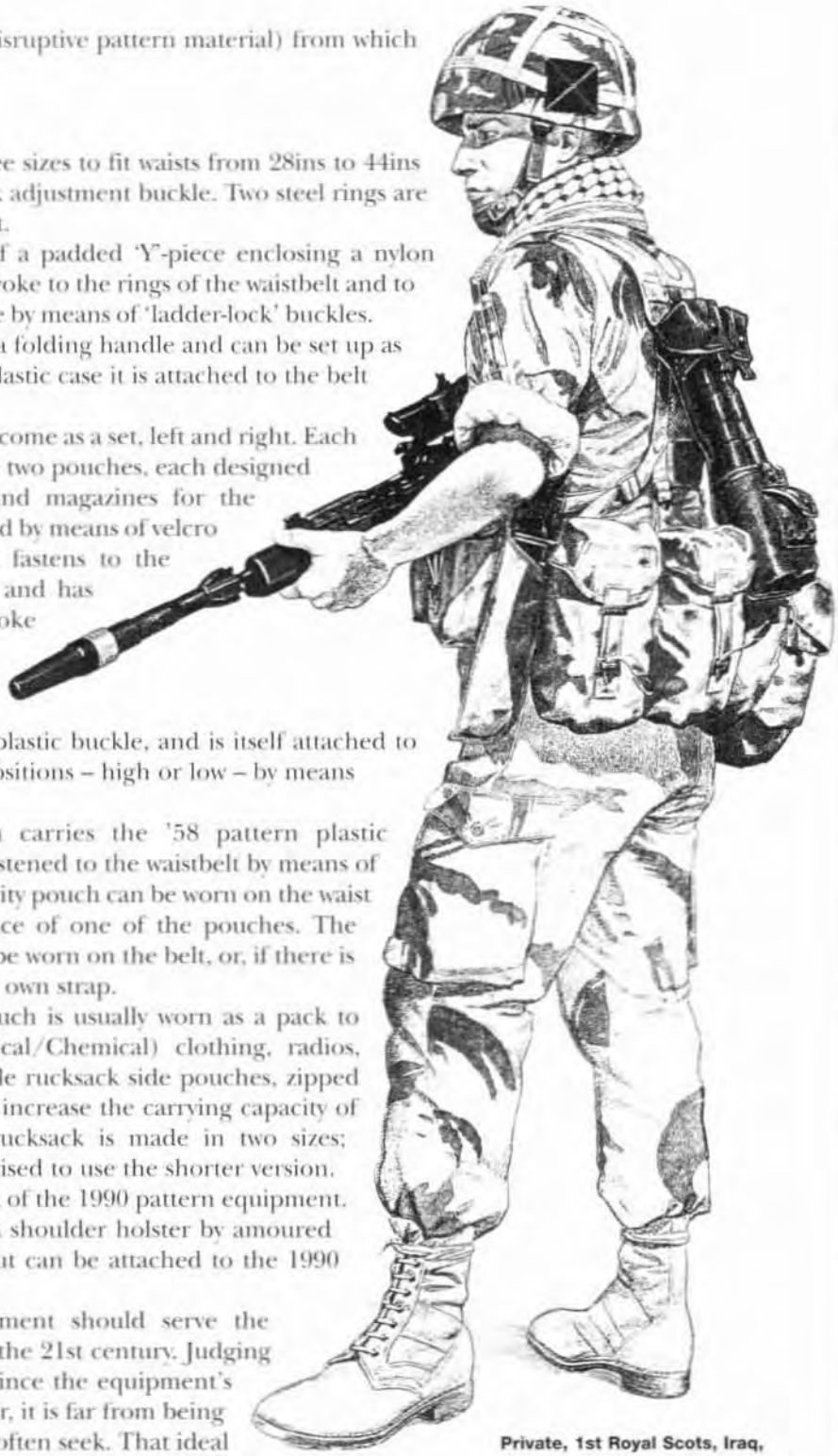
The bayonet frog secures the SA80 bayonet and scabbard by means of a plastic buckle, and is itself attached to the waist belt in one of two positions – high or low – by means of loops.

The water bottle pouch carries the '58 pattern plastic waterbottle and cup, and is fastened to the waistbelt by means of a flap and press studs. The utility pouch can be worn on the waist belt in addition to or in place of one of the pouches. The respirator haversack can also be worn on the belt, or, if there is insufficient space, slung by its own strap.

A single rucksack side pouch is usually worn as a pack to carry NBC (Nuclear/Biological/Chemical) clothing, radios, extra ammunition, etc. Double rucksack side pouches, zipped together and worn as a pack, increase the carrying capacity of the soldier. The complete rucksack is made in two sizes; soldiers below 5ft 6ins are advised to use the shorter version.

A pistol set is issued as part of the 1990 pattern equipment. It is designed to be worn as a shoulder holster by amoured fighting vehicle personnel, but can be attached to the 1990 pattern waist belt.

The 1990 pattern equipment should serve the British infantryman well into the 21st century. Judging by the criticisms of its users since the equipment's baptism of fire in the Gulf War, it is far from being the perfect item designers so often seek. That ideal is yet to come. When it does, the author confidently predicts that it will at times be as heartily loathed by the infantry marching under its weight as were the knapsacks of Wellington's men.



Private, 1st Royal Scots, Iraq, 1991. Attached to the yoke of his 1990 pattern Assault Order is a pouch for two rifle-launched 40mm grenades for this Close Assault Weapon (CLAW). (Author's drawing)

THE PLATES

A: THE 1908 PATTERN WEB INFANTRY EQUIPMENT

A1: Lance-Corporal, 1st Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment; England, 1910

He wears Field Service Marching Order, the contents of his pack being a greatcoat, 'cap comforter', spare socks, mess tin and cover, towel, and a 'holdall' containing knife, fork, spoon, shaving kit, soap and sewing kit. With an SMLE (Short, Magazine, Lee Enfield) .303in rifle, 150 rounds of ammunition, rations, a full bottle of water, etc. the total weight of his clothing, weapons and equipment was just over 60lbs (27.22 kilogrammes). It was in this order that the British Expeditionary Force fought in the opening battles of the Great War.

A2: Private, 7th Battalion, The Seaforth Highlanders, 9th (Scottish) Division; The Somme, July 1916

By 1916 packs were routinely dumped when infantry went into the line; but by this time the issue of helmets, anti-gas equipment and newer weapons had added to the burden borne in action. On marching up to the line the men of the battalion collected two 'Mills bombs' (No.5 grenades) and 220 rounds of small arms ammunition. They sewed yellow patches to their haversacks, and company colours on their sleeves - in this case red for A Company. The SMLE rifle and bayonet, two gas helmets, a pick, and a pannier of Lewis gun magazines complete the assault equipment of our subject, bringing his burden to about 65lbs (29.48 kilogrammes).

A3: Lieutenant, 2nd Battalion, The Lancashire Fusiliers, 4th Division; Western Front, 1918

By 1918 infantry officers had learned to dress and equip themselves like ordinary 'Tommies' in order to avoid the attention of German snipers. Our subject wears an Other Ranks' jacket with his badges of rank on the shoulder straps; and 1908 pattern webbing to which he has attached his Webley .455 inch revolver. Note the divisional (ram's head) patch on his sleeve and the regimental colours worn on his helmet and sleeve.

B: THE 1914 PATTERN LEATHER INFANTRY EQUIPMENT

B1: Sergeant, 8th Battalion, The Rifle Brigade, 14th (Light) Division; Battle of Loos, 1915

The rear view of the equipment's Battle Order is shown here; the equipment set has a khaki finish, and he wears it with the webbing haversack on his back. Attached to the haversack is his mess tin; below this his entrenching tool head is attached to the rear of his belt in its leather case. He carries extra small arms ammunition in slung cotton bandoliers, and his gas helmet is carried in a small cotton haversack on his left hip. Note the patches below his collar denoting battalion and company.

A humorous postcard of 1917. Tommy, already encumbered with his 1914 pattern Marching Order, fails to see the approaching QM sergeant ready to issue a steel helmet, extra ammunition, 'iron' rations, gas helmet, chemicals, etc., etc. (Author's collection)

Sketches of Tommy's life
At the Base. — N° 7

You might one day put on all your stuff, and say to yourself " It is impossible to carry all this ". But all the time the Q. M. department is getting together a lot more to hand you as a parting gift !

B2: Private, 1st/5th Battalion, The King's Own, 55th (West Lancashire) Division; France, 1918
Out of the line, this sentry wears no helmet and his equipment is made of the more commonly seen brown leather. Visible insignia include the regimental cap badge and shoulder titles (the latter worn through a flash of a company colour), the divisional sign at the shoulder, a good conduct chevron, and two wound stripes. He carries his SMLE and fixed bayonet at the 'slope'.

B3: Sergeant, 54th Machine Gun Company, 18th (Eastern) Division; Western Front, 1917
The Machine Gun Corps was raised in 1915 from infantry machine gun sections. This NCO wears the 1914 pattern leather equipment issued to those armed with pistols, in his case a Colt .455in revolver. Note his company battle insignia, worn on his sleeve and helmet; his respirator, and the binocular and compass cases slung around his body.

A young recruit to the 15th London Regiment (Civil Service Rifles), 1917. Private Percy Honychurch wears 1914 pattern Marching Order minus the helmet, gas equipment, ammunition and digging tool he would be issued in France. (Douglas Honychurch)

C: THE 1937 PATTERN WEB EQUIPMENT

C1: Guardsman, 1st Battalion, The Welsh Guards; British Expeditionary Force, France, 1939/40
Not all the British infantry units in France in the winter of 1939/40 had been issued with battledress; but most had the 1937 pattern equipment. Anti-gas precautions required the respirator to be worn at the 'alert' in action, with the gas cape rolled above the haversack ready to be immediately donned when necessary. This guardsman of a battalion deployed as BEF GHQ troops wears 1937 pattern Battle Order, with pouches to carry the magazines for his Bren .303in light machine gun.

C2: Sergeant, 2nd/4th Battalion, The Hampshire Regiment, 43rd (Wessex) Division; England, 1942
Armed with a SMLE and bayonet, he has a first pattern spade-type entrenching tool; a signal pistol slung in its leather holster over his left hip, and a machete looped to the waist belt on his right, are typical of the extra items carried by a rifle platoon sergeant. His haversack holds his mess tins, rations, jersey pullover, cap comforter, towel, full holdall, spare socks, and a groundsheet folded under the flap. In his basic pouches are small arms ammunition, cartridges for his signal pistol, and grenades. Note - from top to bottom - the company, regimental, divisional, branch-of-service (and brigade), and battalion insignia and badges of rank worn on his shoulder straps and sleeves.

C3: Captain, 1st Battalion, The Royal Norfolk Regiment, 24th Guards Independent Brigade Group; England, 1941
His 1937 pattern Battle Order is configured to accomodate a No.2 .38in revolver and ammunition, binoculars, compass, and the multitude of maps, notebooks, protractors and pencils essential to well-conducted training. Note the cases and pouches for these, the special officer's haversack worn at his left side, and the mapcase he is studying. Note also his badges of rank, regimental titles and formation sign.

D1: Infantry signaller, North Africa, 1941
In the early years of the Second World War not all infantry personnel were equipped with basic pouches. This signaller in the Western Desert carries a Wireless Set No.18 into action; the set and its batteries weighed 34lbs (15.42 kilos). Note that he is nevertheless armed with an SMLE rifle, its ammunition being carried in a pair of double-pocket '37 pattern 'cartridge carriers'.

D2: Lance-Corporal, 1st Battalion, The Scots Guards, 24th Independent Brigade (Guards); Naples, 1944
One of the oddest configurations of 1937 pattern equipment was that adopted by battalions of Guards engaged in the Anzio landings in Italy in 1944. Photographs show the guardsmen with haversacks attached to the rear of their waist belts in a manner similar to the 1958 pattern, displayed here by a junior NCO embarking for Anzio. Note his bandoliers of extra small arms ammunition, his second

pattern entrenching tool, and the rolled gas cape - by now used only as a waterproof. His rifle is the long-anticipated .303in No.4, which only began general issue in the mid-war years. The only insignia worn are badges of rank and regimental titles. Note the Guards style for lance-corporal; there were no corporals in the Foot Guards, the next rank up being lance-sergeant, distinguished by three chevrons.

D3: Infantryman, North-West Europe, early 1945
Muffled up against the weather in two-piece denim overalls over his battledress, this typical infantry soldier of the last months of the European war carries extra small arms ammunition in a bandolier round his waist, a gas cape waterproof at the back of his belt, and an enamel mug at the 'alert' on his haversack strap, ready at an instant's notice for a brew or a share of any other sustaining liquid. The No.4 rifle has its short spike bayonet fixed; and at his feet is his platoon's PIAT (Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank), a 34½lb (15.65kg) monster which threw a 2½lb (1.13kg) bomb up to 100 yards. Seen by most as something of a suicide weapon, it was nevertheless highly effective in skilled hands. He carries both the entrenching tool at the back of his belt, and a GS pick with its head secured under his haversack straps.

E: THE 1939 PATTERN LEATHER EQUIPMENT, & 1942 BATTLE JERKIN

E1: Company Sergeant Major, 31st Battalion, Royal Ulster Rifles; Northern Ireland, 1942
Battalions in several high-numbered sequences were composed of very young or of old soldiers, and were deployed as garrison troops, seldom leaving the United Kingdom. Smartly turned out for a guard of honour, this CSM wears 1939 pattern leather equipment Musketry Order with cartridge carriers, and carries his respirator slung. Note the badge of the RUR painted on his helmet; black-on-khaki slip-on regimental titles; the formation badge of Northern Ireland District, rifle regiment arm-of-service strip, battalion flash and badges of rank on the sleeves. His medal ribbons are for service in the Great War and for Regular Army long service.

E2: Corporal, No.2 Commando; Yugoslavia, 1944
He wears a battle jerkin in brown duck material; examples in sand-coloured and white material exist, but do not seem to have been issued for front line service. He is armed with a Thompson .45in sub-machine gun; note also his Fairbairn-Sykes fighting knife, carried in the slot provided for the SMLE bayonet on the left side; toggle rope; the dagger beret badge of No.2 Commando; and white badge of rank on the right sleeve of his pullover.

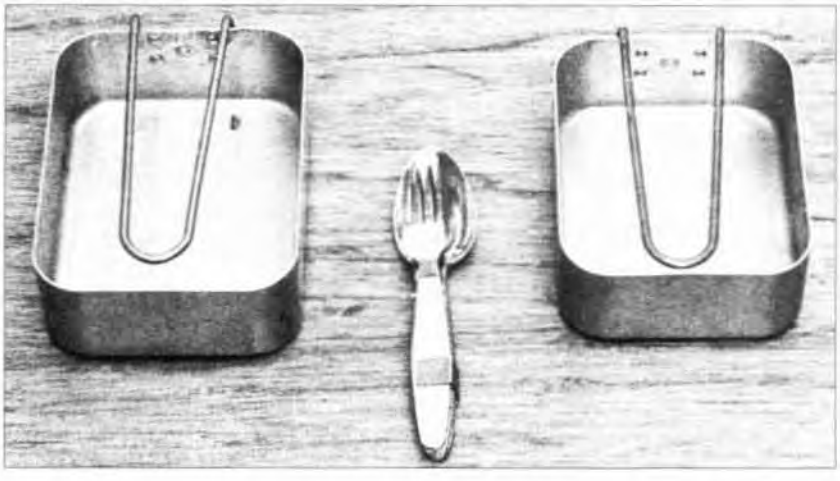
E3: Corporal, 2nd Battalion, The East Yorkshire Regiment, 3rd Division; Normandy, 6 June 1944
For the D-Day landings his battle jerkin is fully packed with ammunition, rations, tools and clothing, and he carries a respirator, shovel, mug and gas cape tied and slung above the jerkin. He wears the new Mk.III helmet, and is armed with a Mk.III 9mm Sten 'machine carbine'. The insignia of his regiment, division, arm-of-service and battalion are displayed on his sleeves.

F: THE 1944 PATTERN WEB EQUIPMENT

F1: Lance-Corporal, 12th (Yorkshire) Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, 5th Parachute Brigade; Java, 1946
The first users of the 1944 pattern equipment, the men of the 5th Parachute Brigade were issued with the 'Jungle Green' uniforms also developed in 1944. Our subject is armed with a Mk.V Sten 9mm machine carbine. Note his battalion titles with the legend 'YORKSHIRE' above his parachutist's brevet and the Pegasus formation sign of Airborne Forces.

F2: Captain, 1st Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment, 29th Brigade, Commonwealth Division; Korea, 1951
1944 pattern equipment saw extensive use in Korea; note here the pistol-armed configuration of this set. In addition to his No.2 .38in revolver this officer has also acquired a US .30cal M2 carbine. His insignia include regimental cap badges, badges of rank, regimental titles, and the US Presidential unit citation (awarderd to the 1st Glosters for their heroic stand at Hill 235 on the Imjin River in April 1951) worn on the sleeves above the divisional sign.

F3: Corporal, 1st Battalion, The Royal Hampshire Regiment, 18 Brigade; Pahang, Malaya, 1954
The shortcomings of the 1944 pattern equipment in Malaya were obvious by the early 1950s when infantrymen began to use alternative kit. This included 'Malayan' pattern pouches,



The mess tin issued with 1937 pattern equipment replaced the 'D'-section mess tin first introduced in 1813. The 1937 pattern came in two 'halves', made in tinned steel and later aluminium. The later pattern is shown above, with a combination knife, fork and spoon set. The 1937 pattern messtin is still in use, but has many years to go before it outlives it predecessor. (Author's collection)

Egypt, 1953: a Bren gunner of the 1st Border Regiment shows the 1937 pattern equipment still in use. (Border Regiment)

native *parangs* (machetes), belts made from airdrop lashings, and (when available) Bergen rucksacks. Only this section commander's pack survives from his original set of 1944 equipment, and even this has been modified with padded shoulder straps. His weapon is the US .30cal M2 carbine. The yellow devices on his hat indicate that he is from B Company.

G: THE 1958 PATTERN WEB EQUIPMENT

G1: Private of infantry battalion serving with United Nations; Cyprus, 1969

He wears the 1958 pattern CEFO and is armed with the L1A1 7.62mm self-loading rifle. As a member of the UN peace-keeping force on the divided island he wears the UN pale blue beret and cap and sleeve badges rather than his British regimental and formation insignia.

G2: Infantry sniper, Belfast, 1970

At that time obsolete sniping equipment was being pressed into service, and our subject is armed with a No.4(T) rifle and No.32 telescope. He has removed the kidney pouches and cape carrier from his 1958 pattern equipment, worn here with body armour; he retains his respirator pouch (left) and water bottle.

G3: GPMG gunner, 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment; Falkland Islands, 1982

Even without kidney pouches his frame rucksack sits uncomfortably on his 1958 pattern equipment. The weight of his L7A1 general purpose machine gun and its belts of 7.62mm ammunition raise his total burden into the region of 90lbs (40.82 kilos).

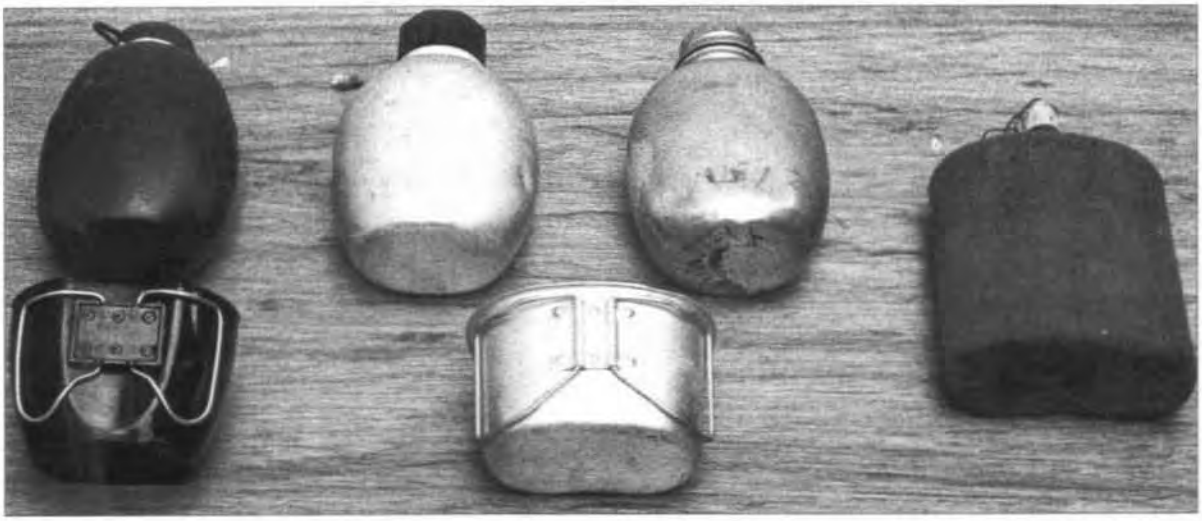
H: THE 1990 PATTERN EQUIPMENT

H1: Private, 1st Battalion, The Staffordshire Regiment, 7th Armoured Brigade; Saudi Arabia, 1991

This infantryman from the Gulf War wears the 1990 pattern 'patrol order', which has been daubed with sand-colour paint, and carries the SA80 rifle and bayonet. Note the jerboa formation sign of his brigade on his sleeve. He has yet to don the NBC suit carried in the pack on his back, and the respirator on his hip. (Chemical strikes, or worse, were always a possibility during the Gulf War.)

H2: Sergeant, 1st Battalion, The Devonshire and Dorset Regiment; UNPROFOR, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1995

Note his 1990 pattern Assault Order. The battalion wore the UN beret during their six-month tour as part of Operation Grapple 6, May-October 1995. In response to Serbian hostage-taking the UNPROFOR commander Lt.Gen.Sir Rupert Smith formed a rapid reaction force, Task Force Alpha being provided by 1 D&D's Warrior AFVs with artillery and



ABOVE **Canteens and water bottles, 1908 to the present day. (Right) The bottle issued with the 1908, 1937 and, initially, the 1958 pattern equipment sets. (Centre) Two patterns of 'canteen' issued with the 1944 pattern set; the cup was common to both. (Left) The canteen and cup eventually issued with the 1958 set and still in use today. (Author's collection)**

BELOW **Respirators. (Right) The last pattern of box respirator to be used by the British Army; tracing its origins back to the 'light box' respirator of 1917, it was eventually replaced by the 'respirator, anti-gas, light' (centre) from 1943. This in turn was replaced by the model S6 (left), which has itself been superceded by the current model. (Author's collection)**

engineer assets. During July-September they saw action on Mount Igman against Serbian forces besieging Sarajevo. The insignia on this NCO's sleeves includes (left arm brassard) the Union flag, regimental title, formation sign of 20th Armoured Brigade (the mailed fist of the Second World War 6th Armoured Division), United Nations badge, and (right sleeve) subdued badge of rank.

H3: Private, 1st Battalion, The Black Watch; UK, present day

Front view of the same equipment, which is made from material of the same 'DPM' disruptive pattern as his combat dress; he carries the SA80 rifle. Note the regimental headgear, the khaki tam-o'-shanter worn with a red hackle but no badge; and the regimental patch on his left sleeve, cut from Black Watch tartan in the shape of the regimental badge worn on the glengarry bonnet with other orders of dress.

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